

1 November 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment
FROM: Director of Central Intelligence
SUBJECT: World Food Problems

I would like to discuss world food problems and the President's
Commission on World Hunger sometime at your convenience.

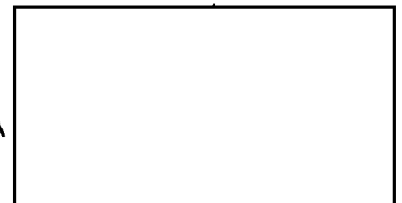


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STANSFIELD TURNER

by



Attachment:
Christian Science Monitor
Editorial, 26 October 1978

THE CHRISTIAN S

"First the blade, then the ear,"

The Monitor's view

Homing in on hunger

If President Carter's new Commission on World Hunger does its work well, Americans should become better educated to what needs to be done to solve one of the world's most crucial and heart-rending problems. Little media attention has focused on the new commission. That suggests a certain apathy on the subject or, at best, a preoccupation with inflation and other worries closer to home. But even the affluent third of the world community will one day be affected if the impoverished two-thirds cannot be helped to feed itself. The problem cries out for long-term solutions.

It is sobering to learn that no meaningful progress on the food front has been made since the 1974 world food conference in Rome. There have been some huge crop increases but these are largely in the wrong part of the world, in the food-abundant countries. The goal of boosting food output by 4 percent annually in food-short nations has not been met.

Just this past weekend Maurice Williams, executive director of the World Food Council, stated that the gap between the rich and the poor nations in food production and consumption is growing wider. In all the developing regions except Asia the output of food has actually decreased in the past two years. In Mr. Williams' words, "The food outlook in low-income areas of the world, already precarious, appears likely to deteriorate further."

On an encouraging note, the rate of population growth in the world is slowing down. But U.S. aid officials warn that burgeoning populations still pose a growing threat to the economic well-being of developing countries. Unless birthrates decline much faster, increases in food production may be offset by the increased population. World Bank experts estimate that as many as 600 million people will be living in absolute poverty by the turn of the century, even if projected increases in aid are taken into account.

Such cold statistics are difficult to relate to the American experience in a way that wins

public support for aid efforts. This is where the new 20-member commission comes in. By means of hearings and interviews across the country it can help Americans to understand both the basic issues behind the problem of hunger and the implications of the problem for the rich nations (the prospect of intolerable inflation being one of them).

The issues are complex and, as food experts suggest, many questions need to be confronted. How, for instance, can the food-deficit countries import food when trade restrictions in the rich nations limit their ability to export and earn foreign exchange? Why are U.S. corporations operating in countries to export vegetables and fruit, say, when these countries themselves are short of food and could be using the land for their own needs? How about the "affluence" problem — do Americans need to consume so much? And how is the sale of arms to poor nations affecting their economic development?

Mr. Carter's commission seems well-equipped to probe these and other matters. It includes food specialists, such as Norman Borlaug of "Green Revolution" fame and nutritionist Jean Mayer; members of Congress; and even a couple of country pop singers to woo audiences. And chairman Sol Linowitz, who helped drive the Panama Canal treaties through the Senate, can be counted on to tackle his new assignment with zest and enthusiasm.

Presidential commissions have a way of fading into oblivion, however. This one, if it merely produces another report on world hunger as it is charged to do by mid-1980, will have fulfilled its mission only in part. Its true success will be measured by the extent to which it rouses the American people to recognize the urgency of the world hunger problem — and to support changes in public policy to combat it. Surely their traditional compassion for those in such basic need can be reawakened and requires only to be channeled into effective action.